

Hip Hop Based Education Lesson Plan

Subject: English Literature

Theme: Money and Wealth

Task

Analyse and Discuss the Representation of Money and Wealth in the Tracks, *U Don't Know*, Jay Z (2001) and, *Institutionalized*, Kendrick Lamar (2015).

Lesson Description

This Hip-Hop Based Education lesson will focus on the representation of money and wealth in two tracks by two influential artists. As a result of the nature of the lyricism I would recommend tackling this lesson with students aged between 16-18 over an hour long period, however the subject matter could be approached with a different age group. The lesson is concerned with developing analytical, comparative and interpretive literary techniques through discussion of the two texts by Kendrick Lamar and Jay Z respectively. A large group discussion will take up the most notable portion of class time, however task time lengths may be altered. Hip Hop is used here to gain cultural knowledge and to explore the use of literary techniques and literary analysis.

Lesson Outline (60 min)

Learning Objectives (5 min)

- 1) Students will be able to discuss analyse and interpret modern poetry using and improving their literary interpretive skills.
- 2) Students will be able to use comparative techniques and construct an argument involving juxtaposition.
- 3) Students will be able to break down a social theme and explore its effect.

Task 1: First impressions (10 min)

Students are to split into approximately 6 groups of 5. Half of the groups will look at Jay Z's *U Don't Know*, with the other half looking at *Institutionalized*. After a moment of small group analysis the groups will feedback.

Question: What are your first impressions on the representation of money and wealth in the text you have been given? (Each group must feedback with one point).

Task 2: Videos (10min)

Kendrick talks about money on Australian radio station:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLQsNEdMxEw> (12:30min - 14:05min).

Jay Z perform *U Don't Know* at Carnegie Hall, 2012:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qM9HRn6Vrp0>

Question: In your groups think about how these two artists talk about money. What is different and how can this be seen in the interview/performance? (Take responses from a couple of groups).



Possible Responses: Kendrick is concerned with how money is spent in society and seems connected to his roots in Compton. Jay Z seems to be more concerned with flaunting wealth, and his performance is a celebration of this.

Task 3: Group Discussion (25 min)

Compare and contrast the ways in which both artists talk about money/wealth in their verses as part of a larger class discussion. (Students will not raise their hands. Collaboration and participation is encouraged).

Possible Questions/Points of Discussion:

- What is Kendrick concerned with when it comes to his wealth?
- What conflict of interest is Kendrick highlighting when it comes to money?
- How does Kendrick highlight the disconnect between money and the hood/Compton?
- What lyrics highlight Kendrick's opinions? How can we deconstruct lyrics to find meaning?
- What is different about Jay Z's representation of wealth?
- Is Jay Z more concerned with the social problems of being wealthy? Is Jay Z connected to his roots?
- What do the texts say about wealth and morality? e.g. Jay Z writes about drugs, Kendrick about robbing. Different contexts?
- What lyrics highlight a celebration of Jay Z's wealth?
- What can this tell us about the role/importance of money in hip hop?
- Which representation of wealth is more influential? In this context how would, 'youth use hip hop culture to fashion themselves.'¹

Final Task: Writing & Reflection (10 min)

Each student must write a short comparative paragraph juxtaposing the two texts. Statements should include evidence and comparison between artists and/or their lyrics. This task should draw on knowledge learnt in class with students drawing on comparative and analytical literary skills. (Response may be shared in final reflective discussion).

¹ Mark Lamont Hill, *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity*, (Teachers College Press, New York and London, 2009), p.5.

Bibliography

Jay Z U Don't Know Carnegie Hall (exclusive), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qM9HRn6Vrp0>, (March 2012), [accessed 2 November 2017].

Kendrick Lamar Talks About Sex, Money and Drugs in an Interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QLQsNEdMxEw>, (May 2014), [accessed 1 November 2017].

Lamont Hill, Mark, *Beats, Rhymes, and Classroom Life: Hip Hop Pedagogy and the Politics of Identity*, (Teachers College Press, New York and London, 2009).

Lyrical Appendix

Institutionalized, Kendrick Lamar (2015)

[Verse 2]

Fuck am I 'posed to do when I'm lookin' at walkin' licks?
The constant big money talk 'bout the mansion and foreign whips
The private jets and passport, presidential glass floor
Gold bottles, gold models, sniffin' up the ass for
Instagram flicks, suckin' dick, fuck is this?
One more sucker wavin' wit a flashy wrist
My defense, mechanism tell me to get him
Quickly because he got it
It's a recession, then why the fuck he at King of Diamonds?
No more livin' poor, meet my four-four
When I see 'em, put the per diem on the floor
Now Kendrick, know they're your co-workers
But it's gon' take a lot for this pistol go cold turkey
Now I can watch his watch on the TV and be okay
But see I'm on the clock once that watch landin' in LA
Remember steal from the rich and givin' it back to the poor?
Well, that's me at these awards
I guess my grandmama was warnin' a boy
She said...

U Don't Know, Jay Z (2001)

[Verse 2]

I tell you the difference between me and them
They tryin' to get they ones, I'm tryin' to get them M's
One million, two million, three million, four
In just five years, forty million more
You are now lookin' at the forty million boy
I'm rapin' Def Jam 'til I'm the hundred million man

[Verse 3]

I came into this motherfucker a hundred grand strong
Nine to be exact, from grindin' G-packs
Put this shit in motion, ain't no rewindin' me back



Could make 40 off a brick, but one rhyme could beat that
And if somebody woulda told 'em that Hov' would sell clothing
Not in this lifetime, wasn't in my right mind
That's another difference that's between me and them
I smarten up, open the market up
One million, two million, three million, four
In eighteen months, eighty million more
Now add that number up with the one I said before
You are now lookin' at one smart black boy
Momma ain't raised no fool
Put me anywhere on God's green earth, I'll triple my worth